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How Production in Gage, Nebraska, Soil Conservation District was Stepped Up*

The Gage Soil Conservation District in Nebraska was confronted with a very heavy work load. In addition to the requirements for assisting district cooperators, the number of ACP referrals was large and steadily increasing. The work unit conservationist, Dexter Haws, and his assistants began to take stock of the local situation. They knew they were all working steadily at their job, but they were not satisfied with their accomplishments in comparison to the time spent on the job.

After studying their problem and discussing it with the District Governing Board, they decided on a definite course of action. They decided among other things that it would be wise to better organize their work. Here are some of the actions they took:

1. The Gage Soil Conservation District (Gage County) consisted of 24 townships. It was decided to break the district work load down to the 24 townships or areas of operations, since there were so few rural communities. This was done in late December 1952. After setting up the areas of operation according to townships, the second step was to establish the work unit files by townships. These files consisted of information on farm planning, application and maintenance. This was accomplished by placing township dividers in the files. Appropriate subject matter folders were then placed according to each township. These subject matter folders consisted of such items as ACP referrals, requests for assistance in planning, soil and capability maps, records of groups and leaders, farm conservation plans, and requests for assistance in lay-out work.
2. Weekly schedules for all work unit personnel were worked out in advance. The schedules provided for a full day's work in one or adjoining townships depending on the work load shown by the files. Soil Conservation Service aids were assigned to specific work areas so they became more familiar with individual farmers as well as better acquainted with the farms.
3. Information programs were started to let the public know about the more efficient and orderly ways of operations. The 32 contractors in Gage Work Unit were given special attention regarding the new method of operations. They cooperated fully. Farmers cooperated in the efficient method of operations and would not demand assistance out of turn which previously disrupted schedules.
4. Small groups and their leaders were worked with wherever possible in each township. Special attention was given to working with "opinion molders."

*Prepared by J. Dexter Haws, Work Unit Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, Beatrice, Nebraska in collaboration with Hugh A. Brown, Farm and Ranch Planning Branch, Washington, D. C.

5. A map of Gage County was prepared showing townships and a number was given each township. A land ownership map of each township was prepared and a number assigned to each farm. With the use of the ownership map it was possible to spot the location of a farm instantly. An alphabetical cooperator's register with the legal description was maintained for the district so any farm could be found almost immediately. This facilitated efficient scheduling of time within townships and a reduction of mileage.
6. A training program that developed each individual to serve to his greatest capacity was carried on in the work unit. Frequent staff conferences were held.
7. Recognition for a job well done gave each man the incentive to do a better job for the Service.
8. An effort was made to instill into each employee the idea that his job was of the greatest importance to the entire organization and that he should be as efficient as possible in order to turn out the maximum amount of work. Individual goals were developed with each employee.
9. This system of operation was developed in December 1952 and put into effect for the calendar year 1953. Weather and other factors which might be expected to affect field work were comparable for both years.
10. From year to year the personnel in the work unit gained experience which was a factor in increasing production.
11. The following tables show comparative progress during 1952 and 1953. It is worthy to note that about one third more cooperators were serviced after this systematic method of scheduling field activity was employed. This was accomplished with five percent less manpower. The approximate man years available in the work unit in 1952 was 8.1. In 1953 it was 7.7 man years. The average mileage traveled per district cooperator was reduced from 116 miles in 1952 to 50 miles in 1953, or a reduction of 57 percent. Even though more work was accomplished with less manpower, the work unit staff was able to take more annual leave in 1953 than in 1952.

<u>Main Activities</u>		<u>Calendar Years</u>		<u>Actual Changes</u>	
		1952	1953	Amount	Percent
A. <u>Soil surveys</u>					
1. Mapped	acres	18,121	53,690	+35,569	+196.3
2. Time required	hours	422	1,543	+ 1,121	+265.6
3. Average per hour	acres	42.9	34.8	-8.1	-31.

Main Activities (Cont'd)		Calendar Years		Actual Changes	
		1952	1953	Amount	Percent
B. Conservation Planning by stages					
1.	Initial stage of planning				
a.	Cooperators number	147	482	+335	+227.9
b.	Area covered acres	23,966	83,017	+59,051	+246.4
2.	Advanced stage of planning				
a.	Cooperators number	0	89	+89	--
b.	Area covered acres	0	17,417	+17,417	--
3.	Basic conservation plans				
a.	Number	9	53	+44	+489.
b.	Acres	2,173	8,863	+6,690	+308.
4.	Total new district cooperators				
a.	Plans number	159	482	+323	+203.
b.	Area covered acres	26,139	83,017	+56,878	+218.
5.	Active total cooperators in dist.				
a.	Total (at end of year) number	918	1,456	+538	+58.6
b.	Total acres	164,349	261,180	+96,831	+59.
6.	Total man hours, each year				
a.	Conservation planning				
	(all stages)	781	1,731	+950	+122.
b.	Conservation application				
	(all cooperators)	4,355	3,649	-706	-16.
c.	Average man hours on appli-				
	cation per coop.	4.7	2.1	-2.6	-55.
C. Application of Practices					
1.	Contour farming acres	2,030	5,317	+3,287	+162.
2.	Stubble mulching acres	2,185	4,171	+1,986	+91.
3.	Cons. crop rotations acres	2,778	3,439	+661	+24.
4.	Rotation or deferred				
	grazing acres	145	1,048	+903	+622.
5.	Pasture seeding acres	265	224	-41	-16.
6.	Contour furrowing acres	164	385	+221	+135.
7.	Tree planting acres	18	116	+98	+544.
8.	Hedge row planting miles	0	1.9	+1.9	--
9.	Wildlife area improvement acres	9	25	+16	+178.
10.	Farm drainage acres	500	530	+30	+6.
11.	Terracing miles	192.9	280	+87.1	+45.
12.	Pond construction number	11	7	-4	-36.
13.	Waterway development acres	1,546	1,578	+32	+2.
14.	Drop spillway number	60	51	-9	-15
15.	Fish pond mgt. number	0	32	+32	--
16.	Diversion construction	2.2	2.8	+6	+27.
D. SCS Assistance on ACP work					
1.	ACP referrals received number	3,884	4,164	+280	+7.
2.	ACP referrals serviced number	3,884	4,164	+280	+7.
3.	Total farms serviced number	2,252	2,402	+150	+6.
	(on one or more actions)				
4.	Technical services used (ea. yr.)				
a.	SCS regular personnel M/hrs.	14,138	12,047	-2,091	-15.
b.	SCS employed with 5% f.M/hrs.	6,838	3,549	-3,289	-48.
c.	Total SCS assistance M/hrs.	20,976	15,596	-5,380	-26.
5.	Average time per farm				
	served M/hrs.	9.3	6.4	- 2.9	-31.

Main Activities (Cont'd)

	Calendar Years		Actual Changes	
	1952	1953	Amount	Percent

E. Total regular work unit time used1. Sub-total operations (item 8-195)

M/hrs.	8,163	11,004	+2,841	+35.
2. Sub-total facilitating . . . M/hrs.	7,173	3,088	-4,085	-57.
3. Leave taken M/hrs.	1,185	1,454	+269	+23.
4. Total technical time M/hrs.	16,521	15,596	-925	-6.
(from 195)				
5. Approximate man years . . . M/yrs.	8.1	7.7	-.4	-5.

F. Mileage traveled by work unit staff

1. Automobiles or cars miles	35,388	11,474	-23,914	-68.
2. Pickups miles	71,280	61,368	-9,912	-14.
3. Total (all vehicles). . . . miles	106,668	72,842	-33,826	-32.
4. Number of vehicles operated No.	16	10	-6	-38.
5. Average miles per dist. cooperators (F-3 by B-5a) miles	116	50	-66	-57.
6. Average miles per hour worked (F-3 by D-4b plus E-4) miles	4.5	3.7	-.8	-18.

G. Other pertinent data

Such as tours, demonstrations, news articles, etc.

Calendar Years

Unit	1952	1953
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Meetings

Group (small)	No.	25	136
Watershed	No.	3	3
Annual (District)	No.	1	1
Service Clubs	No.	4	6
Rural School Teachers	No.	1	2
Rural Schools	No.	12	2
City Schools	No.	3	2
Vocational Agriculture	No.	3	4
4-H Clubs	No.	1	1
Contractors	No.	2	1
Church	No.	5	4

Tours

Ministerial Assn.	No.	0	1
Chamber of Commerce	No.	2	1
District Cooperators	No.	2	4
County Board Supervisors	No.	0	1
Township Board	No.	0	1
P.M.A. Committee	No.	1	1
Airplane	No.	0	1
Service Clubs	No.	0	1
News Articles	No.	53	67
Radio Programs	No.	24	11
T. V. Programs	No.	0	1
News Letters	No.	0	4
Exhibit	No.	0	2





